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Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-07 SS-07 NSC-06 SSO-00 NSCE-00
/024 W
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O R 101547Z AUG 77
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TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECSTATE WASHDC 4356

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JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OREP (DERWINSKI, EDWARD)
SUBJ: CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI'S CALL ON PRESIDENT ASSAD, AUGUST 10

1. SUMMARY:

CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI HAD CORDIAL ONE-HOUR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD AUGUST 10. EXPRESSED CONGRESSIONAL APPRECIATION FOR SYRIAN EFFORTS IN LEBANON AND PLEASURE AT THE IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES. ASSAD SAID LATEST STATEMENTS COMING OUT OF ISRAEL HAVE NOT BEEN ENCOURAGING. HE CITED DAYAN'S THREE "NOES": NO ARAB SOVEREIGNTY ON THE WEST BANK/GAZA, NO PALESTINIAN ENTITY AND NO RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS. ASSAD ADMITTED NEGATIVE ARAB POSITION AFTER 1967 LOST SUPPORT OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION. HE SAID THAT THEN AS NOW MANY ARABS DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY OF REACHING PEACE WITH ISRAEL. BUT ASSAD
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CONCLUDED THAT SYRIA, BASED ON ITS FAVORABLE IMPRESSIONS OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE, WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT FOR PEACE. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE AT BEING IN SYRIA FOR THE FIRST TIME AND SAID THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS, AND ESPECIALLY THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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COMMITTEE, WERE MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE STEADY EFFORTS
OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AIMED AT BRINGING A MEASURE OF
STABILITY TO LEBANON. THIS HAS BEEN UNIVERSALLY APPRECIATED
AND APPROVED IN CONGRESS. HE ADDED THAT AS ONE LOOKS BACK
FOUR YEARS THERE HAS BEEN REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT IN U.S.-
SYRIAN RELATIONS AND THIS HAS BEEN A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT
FOR ALL PEOPLES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE PRESIDENT THANKED
DERWINSKI AND SAID THAT THE DEVELOPMENT IN OUR RELATIONS
IS CONTINUING. HE SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY SATISFIED WITH
THE VISITS TO SYRIA AND THE AREA OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND
HAD NO DOUBTS THAT THEIR VISITS HAVE GIVEN A BETTER IMPRESSION
OF THE REALITIES OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS.
FREQUENT MEETINGS AND VISITS ARE OF GREAT SERVICE TO THE
AREA, TO THE U.S., AND TO THE WORLD. AMERICAN OFFICIALS
BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENT NOTED,
ARE MUCH BETTER INFORMED TODAY OF THE SITUATION IN THE
REGION. SYRIA, FOR ITS PART, TODAY HAS A BETTER APPRE-
CIATION OF THE SITUATION IN THE U.S.; AND THIS IS ALSO
USEFUL.

3. ASSAD THEN REMARKED THAT WHILE SECRETARY VANCE HAS BEEN
IN THE AREA, REPORTS FROM ISRAEL INCLUDING PRIMIN BEGIN'S
AND FONMIN DAYAN'S LATEST STATEMENTS, HAVE NOT BEEN ENCOURAG-
ING. SYRIA, HOWEVER, HAS A VERY GOOD IMPRESSION OF PRESI-
DENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE: OTHERWISE DAMASCUS WOULD
NOT BE TRYING FOR A SOLUTION. " IT APPEARS TO US THAT ISRAEL
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IS TRYING TO CLOSE ALL THE DOORS. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE
THAT PEACE REQUIRES CONTINUING EFFORTS."

4. DERWINSKI OBSERVED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER ENJOYS THE FULL
COOPERATION OF BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS
IN HIS EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A JUST SETTLEMENT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST. EVERYONE WANTS TO SEE PROGRESS CONTINUE.
SPECIFICALLY, THE ATTITUDE IN CONGRESS TODAY IS MORE
FRIENDLY TO AND UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIA'S POSITION THAN IT
WAS JUST FOUR YEARS AGO. BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT,
CARTER IS IN A BETTER POSITION TO TAKE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES.
DERWINSKI COMMENTED THAT AFTER HE LISTENED TO BEGIN A FEW
WEEKS AGO IN WASHINGTON, HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HIS
PRIVATE NEGOTIATING POSITION WAS MORE PRACTICAL THAN
HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS MIGHT INDICATE. PRIVATELY BEGIN
EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO
CONTINUE AND HIS HOPE THAT THEY WOULD BE FRUITFUL. IN THE
U.S., POLITICAL TRADITION HAS BEEN THAT IN THE FIRST YEAR
OF AN ADMINISTRATION, PARTICULARLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE
PRESIDENT IS FREE FROM PETTY AND PREMATURE POLITICAL
CRITICISM. BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS WANT TO SEE
THE NEW PRESIDENT SUCCEED AND THE PUBLIC WILL NOT ACCEPT

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PREMATURE CRITICISM.

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5. ASSAD NOTED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY SAID ISRAEL WOULD NOT AGREE TO ANY PALESTINIAN ENTITY TR ALLOW ANY FORM OF ARAB SOVEREIGNTY ON THE WEST BANK OR IN GAZA, INCLUDING JORDANIAN SOVEREIGNTY, NOR WOULD IT RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS. NEVERTHELESS, ISRAEL SAYS IT IS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE EVERYTHING. DERWINSKI AGREED THAT THIS WAS AN OBVIOUS CONTRADICTION.

6. AMBASSADOR MURPHY RECALLED THE 1967 KHARTOUM CONFERENCE AND THE THREE "NOES" WHICH HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED BY THE ARAB SIDE AND COMMENTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL CHANGES IN ARAB POSITIONS SINCE THEN. SUGGESTED THERE COULD BE COMPARABLE CHANGES IN ISRAELI POSITION. PRESIDENT ASSAD SAID CASES WERE NOT PARALLEL. THERE HAD BEEN CHANGES IN PERSONALITIES NOT POSITIONS ON THE ARAB SIDE SINCE 1967. HE ASSERTED THOSE LEADERS WHO HAD SAID NO AT KHARTOUM TEN YEARS AGO HAD NOT BEEN AGAINST PEACE.
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THEY WERE FOR PEACE BUT DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE
WAS ANY POSSIBILITY TO REACH PEACE WITH ISRAEL. THEY
BELIEVED IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL
AND TO A GREAT EXTENT EVENTS SINCE THEN HAVE PROVEN THEM
CORRECT. BECAUSE IF ONE CONSIDERS THE ISRAELI STATEMENTS,
WHAT DO THEY INDICATE? PRESIDENT NASSER WAS NOT AGAINST PEACE,
HE WAS FOR PEACE. PEACE IN THE AREA HAD BEEN ONE OF THE
STARTING POINTS IN HIS ORIGINAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE REVOLUTION.
NASSER HAD BEGUN BY TRYING TO WORK FOR DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT. BUT
ISRAEL'S 1955 AGGRESSION AGAINST EGYPT IN GAZA, CAUSED A CHANGE
IN THE THINKING OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND AND THEY
STARTED PREPARATIONS FOR WAR. THAT 1955 AGGRESSION WAS THE TURNING
POINT IN THE THINKING OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS.
EVEN TODAY THERE ARE MANY IN THE ARAB WORLD, BOTH OFFICIAL
AND PRIVATE, WHO WANT PEACE BUT CLAIM IT IS USELESS TO DEAL
WITH ISRAEL. AS THEY LISTEN TO THE STATEMENTS BY ISRAELI
LEADERS AND SEE ISRAELI DEEDS, THEY SEE NO POSSIBILITY
FOR PEACE. AND, OF COURSE, ONE CAN'T TELL SUCH PEOPLE THAT
THEY MUST WAIT UNTIL AN ENTIRE GENERATION OF ISRAELI LEADERS
LIKE BEGIN, DAYAN, MEIR, AND RABIN DIES OFF.

7. DERWINSKI SAID THAT THE ARAB LEADERSHIP'S WILLING-
NESS TO NEGOTIATE WHEN COMPARED TO FONMIN DAYAN'S
STATEMENTS WILL CONVINCE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AS TO WHICH
SIDE IS THE MOST POSITIVE IN SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THE
ARAB'S PROBLEMS. THE AMBASSADOR RECALLED THAT IN 1967 WORLD
PUBLIC OPINION HAD TURNED AGAINST THE ARABS BECAUSE
THEY WERE NOT PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE AND NOT PREPARED TO
MAKE PEACE. ASSAD AGREED THAT ISRAEL BENEFITED GREATLY
FROM THE ARAB POSITIONS IN 1967 AND THAT ANYONE IGNORING
WORLD PUBLIC OPINION MAKES A MISTAKE.

8. DERWINSKI SAID THAT THE ISRAELI ELECTION HAD BEEN A SURPRISE
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AND PERHAPS THERE WILL BE ADJUSTMENTS IN ISRAELI POLICY WHICH
WILL BE A PLEASANT SURPRISE TO ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS.
(ASSAD CHUCKLED.) LOOKING AT THW POPULATION SIZE AND THE
ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE ARAB WORLD, ISRAEL SHOULD REALIZE
THAT THE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED FROM A PEACEFUL SOLUTION
ARE IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS. THIS IS THE HOPE WE ALL
HAVE. ASSAD REPLIED THAT SYRIA WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE
EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT SINCE ITS DESIRE FOR PEACE IS
GENUINE.

9. DERWINSKI POINTED OUT THERE MUST BE GOOD WILL ON ALL
SIDES SO THAT ANY AGREEMENT IS WORKABLE AND WILL NOT BREAK
DOWN. ASSAD AGREED AND SAID THAT AT THE SAME TIME SYRIA

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IS EXERTING EVERY EFFORT TO ACHIEVE PEACE, IT HAS NO SELF
DOUBTS WHEN IT LOOKS AHEAD TO THE FUTURE. IT IS CLEAR
THAT IF ISRAEL CONTINUES ITS AGRESSIVE POLICY IT WILL BE
IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. ISRAEL MUST TAKE MORE INTO ACCOUNT
BOTH GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS.

10. DERWINSKI AGAIN OBSERVED THAT PERHAPS ONCE BEGIN
ADJUSTS TO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS NEW OFFICE HIS
POSITION WILL MODERATE. ASSAD RESPONDED HE DOUBTED THIS
SINCE ONCE ONE REACHES BEGIN'S AGE, HAVING SPENT HIS LIFE
THINKING A CERTAIN WAY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO CHANGE.
"THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE FROM THE BEGINNING IT HAS
BEEN KNOWN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ISRAEL THAT BEGIN FAVORS
VIOLENCE AND KILLING. HE WROTE A BOOK BOASTING OF THE
VIOLENCE HE HAS COMMITTED, YET NOW HE DESCRIBES THE PLO
AS AN ORGANIZATION OF VILLENCE."

11. DERWINSKI COMMENTED HE THOUGHT THE KEY WAS PRESIDENT
CARTER'S AND SECRETARY VANCE'S DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE
WORKING FOR PEACE DESPITE THE OBSTACLES. HOPEFULLY, THERE
WILL BE CONTINUING MEMENTUM REGARDLESS OF THE PUBLIC STATE-
MENTS SO THAT PROGRESS CAN BE ACHIEVED. THERE IS COMPLETE
POLIICALUNITY IN THE U.S. BEHIND CARTER'S EFFORTS. ASSAD
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SAID THAT THIS WAS GOOD NEWS, POLITICAL UNITY IN THE UNITED
STATES WILL HELP PRESIDENT CARTER ACHIEVE POSITIVE MOVEMENT
IN ISRAEL. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE NOW THAT THERE ARE
INTIMATE AND COORDINATED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND CONGRESS. DERWINSKI THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR TAKING HIS
TIME TO RECEIVE ONE CONGRESSMAN AND HE WANTED TO EMPHASIZE
THAT THERE IS GREAT RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT ASSAD IN
CONGRESS AND APPRECIATION FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE SAID HE HOPED THIS DEVELOPMENT
WOULD CONTINUE. ASSAD THANKED DERWINSKI AND SAID
HE WAS PLEASED BY THE EFFORTS OF MANY CONGRESSMEN WHICH HE
BELIEVED HAD BOTH HELPED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES AND
CONTRIBUTED TO MOVING FORWARD EFFORTS TOWARDS PEACE IN THE
REGION.

12. THIS MESSAGE NOT CLEARED WITH CODEL AND
SUBJECT TO HIS CORRECTION.
MURPHY

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